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STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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Hardcases

AGUIRRE-SACASA PERKINS MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

Creative Director & Executive Director: **STEPHEN KING**

Script: **ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA**

Art: **MIKE PERKINS**

Color Art: **LAURA MARTIN**

Lettering: **VC'S RUS WOOTON**

Cover: **TOMM COKER WITH LAURA MARTIN**

Production: **IRENE Y. LEE**

Assistant Editor: **CHARLIE BECKERMAN**

Consulting Editors: **MICHAEL HORWITZ & BILL ROSEMAN**

Senior Editor: **RALPH MACCHIO**

Vice President of Creative: **TOM MARVELLI**

Senior Vice President of Publishing Sales: **DAVID GABRIEL**

Senior Vice President of Strategic Development: **RUWAN JAYATILLEKE**

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Publisher: **DAN BUCKLEY**

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Two months ago, something happened at Project Blue in California. Within weeks, a flu-like virus—"Captain Trips"—swept through the world, killing 99% of the population. Now, it's up to the survivors to piece together a new life in a world that has moved on.

Stu Redman and Glen Bateman have traveled together since meeting in New Hampshire, along a road that has not always been easy. On his long journey to the Boulder Free Zone, Stu has survived being shot in a jail cell, an ambush by armed thugs, and a vain attempt to remove an ailing companion's burst appendix.

However, there are some bright spots—he and Frannie Goldsmith have fallen in love. Unfortunately, this is much to the chagrin of Harold Lauder, Frannie's original travel companion and secret admirer, who now dreams exclusively of the Dark Man.

Mother Abigail, at the age of 108, continues to direct people towards Boulder, where God has told her to settle the survivors of the plague. Larry Underwood's group is nearing the Free Zone, but not all of his charges are excited: Nadine Cross hasn't been dreaming of the kind old woman like the rest of her fellow travelers—in fact, she suspects that she's not meant to end up in Boulder at all.

Larry, however, couldn't be more thrilled to have made it to Boulder, and he owes a great deal to Harold Lauder, whose trail and signs he followed all the way from Maine. But as we all find out sooner or later, few heroes live up to their reputation...



DAWN.
OVER THE BOULDER FREE ZONE.

"I am going to have a *hell* of a headache this afternoon, Stu. I don't believe I've stayed up drinking all night since I was an undergrad."

"This sunrise is worth it, Glen."

"Beautiful... You ever been in the Rockies before?"

"Nope. But I'm glad I came... What's going to happen now?"

"Happen?"

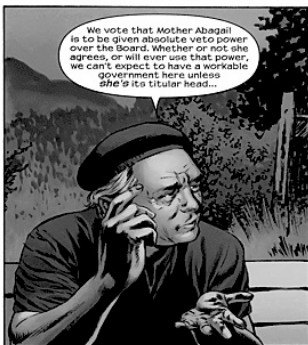
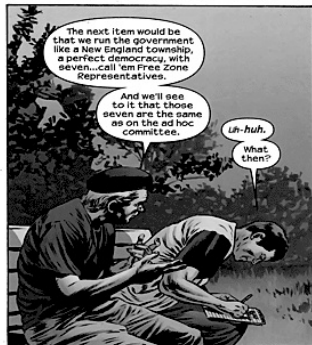
"That's why I got you up here. I told Frannie, 'I'm gonna get Glen good and drunk and then pick his brains about what happens next.'"

Society. Society happens next.... People are coming in dribs and drabs right now, but there may be as many as eight thousand by the first snow in November.

Write that down as prediction number one.







"She's the thing we all have in common...
The people coming here dreamed of her;
she's what makes us feel safe
and secure..."

*Mother Abigail
was thinking
about electricity.*

*And about how Hemmingford Home,
with its pump and all, was better
equipped to handle the end of the
world than this fancy house in the
Mapleton Hill section of Boulder...*



*They would get the power back on, of
course. It was one of the things God
had shown her in her dreams.*

*She knew a goodish number of
things that were coming;
some from the dreams, some
from her common sense.*



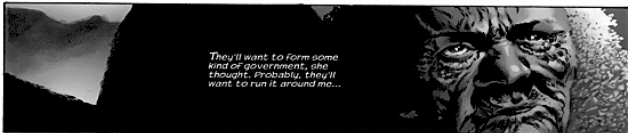
*Soon, all the people would
stop running around like
headless chickens and
start pulling together.*

*She wasn't a sociologist
like Glen Bateman, but she
knew people always did pull
together after awhile.*

*The curse and the
blessing of the
human race was its
chumminess...*



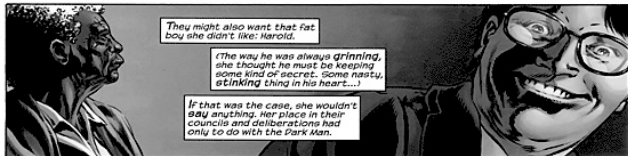
*They'll want to form some
kind of government, she
thought. Probably, they'll
want to run it around me...*





She couldn't allow *that*, of course, much as she would like to; *that* would not be God's will.

She would insist Nick have a part in the running of things, and Ralph, and *maybe* that Texan Stuart Redman.



They might also want that fat boy she didn't like: Karold.

(The way he was always grinning, she thought he must be keeping some kind of secret. Some nasty, stinking thing in his heart....)

If that was the case, she wouldn't *say* anything. Her place in their councils and deliberations had only to do with the Park Man.



He had no name, although it pleased him to call himself Flagg for the time being; she knew that.

Also, that on the far side of the mountains his work was already well begun.

She didn't know his specific plans--they were as veiled as whatever secrets lay in that fat boy's heart--but she was certain of his goal:

To destroy
all of them.



The black man who, unlike God and man, was only able to break and unshape...

Anti-Christ? Call him *anti-creation*...

He would have his followers, of course. He was a liar; his father was the Father of Lies; and he would be like a big neon sign to the cowardly and the wicked...

*Would they win?
Would he?*

God was a gamesman; it was not for her to know.

Thy will be done.

Mother? There's some folks that just got here and would like to say howdy, if you ain't too tired. A pretty good crew, I'd say. Fella in charge is named Underwood.

Ralph Bretner, who was part of Nick's team.

Bring 'em up, Ralph, that's fine.

Good enough, Mother; will do.



Before you go, Ralph, where's Nick? Haven't seen him today nor yesterday neither. He getting too good for homefolks?



He's been out at the reservoir. Him and that electrician, Brad Kichner, have been looking at the power plant. I was out there earlier.

Figured all those chief's orta have at least one Indian to boss around...

That made Mother Abigail cackle; she did like Ralph, didn't she?



Anyway, that fella Redman came by while we were workin'. To talk to Nick about being on some committee.

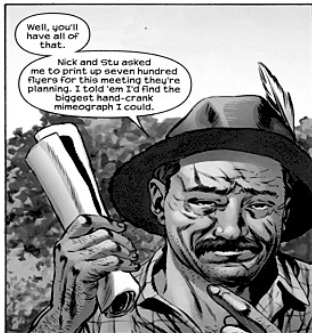
Nick wrote a couple of pages, but what it came down to was...fine by me, if it's fine by Mother Abigail. We'll do whatever she wants.





What I want is
to go on livin' free like
I always have, like an
American. I just want
my say when it's time
for me to have it.

Like an
American.



Well, you'll
have all of
that.

Nick and Stu asked
me to print up seven hundred
flyers for this meeting they're
planning. I told 'em I'd find the
biggest hand-crank
mimeograph I could.



That's fine.
Time everyone got
done lollygaggin'
around--

Speaking of which,
people out by the gate,
getting heatstroke,
while you and me chin
like there's no
tomorrow...

I'll bring
them in.



And
Ralph?



Print a
thousand.



The new arrivals filed in, a group of nineteen, and Mother Abigail felt her sin, the mother of sin.

Pride.

The female side of Satan in the human race, the quiet egg of all sin...Pride, which had kept Moses out of Canaan...



She had always been a proud woman. Proud of the floor she washed on her hands and knees, proud her children had turned out all right, proud of her life. But...

...she had not made her life. And the mothers of children were the daughters of God, don't forget.



And on this fine morning, as the pilgrims filed through her gate, she thought, proudly, it's me they've come to see.

I am Abigail Freemantle, but most folks round here call me Mother Abigail.



You're really real.

I'm...We're glad to be here. My name's Larry Underwood. I... I dreamed of you.

She thought this man seemed a bit green and apt to bend, but...she liked him.



I'm Lucy Swan, Mother Abigail, pleased to make your acquaintance.

I dreamed of you, too, and would you mind if I asked, well...



A hundred and eight at last count, though it feels like two hundred and sixteen some days.

Glad you could come by, Lucy.



Then it was a boy and a woman with dark eyes.

The boy was all right, but the woman...



He's here, she thought. He's come in the shape of this woman...

For behold he comes in more forms than his own...the wolf...the crow...the snake...



For Nadine Cross, the moment was one of confusion.

An almost swooning sense of revulsion and terror came over her because the old woman could...what?





I can't think...
He comes in
many shapes...

What happened...? I was
sitting here, waiting to be
kowitzed to--no use
denying that--but there
was something about
that woman...



...wasn't there?

Hey, Mother
Abigail. The name's
Mark Zellman. From
Lowville, New York.

I dreamed
about you.



Then the thread was gone,
and she was bantering again:

I had me a
great-nephew lived
in upstate New York.
Town named...Rouse's
Point, on Lake
Champlain.



After Zellman, others came
to make their manners.

Including an old man named
Richard Farris, nicknamed the
Judge, who almost made her
feel uncomfortable again.

She spoke to them all,
nodded, smiled, but the
pleasure was gone...



...replaced by the feeling,
fading, that she had missed
something of great significance
and might later be sorry.



**BASELINE DRIVE.
NICK AND RALPH'S HOUSE.**

A black and white illustration of a man with dark hair, wearing a dark shirt, sitting at a table. He is looking down at a piece of paper and writing with a pen. On the table are several other papers, a bottle of ink, and a small plate with a pen. The background is dark and indistinct.

Nick thought better when he wrote, so he jotted down everything that might be of importance...

For instance, the fact that Boulder wasn't like other towns.

Oh, there were corpses here, and something would have to be done about them, but it wasn't like the other towns that stank of...of charnel houses.

It was as if, somehow, Mother Abigail had led them to the *one* city in the United States that was more or less clear of plague victims...

Not that it would matter much if they didn't get the power running by the time the first cold snap arrived.

If they didn't, Nick was afraid that the gathering flock would begin to slip away, and all the meetings, representatives, and ratifications wouldn't stop them.

An unpleasant feeling seemed to be running through the people gathered in Boulder. They were like a bunch of scared kids knocking around in the local haunted house after dark...

Luckily, according to Ralph, there wasn't much wrong at the power plant; possibly, they could have the lights on again by Labor Day...



Earlier today, before Ralph went upstairs to sleep, he'd given Nick a copy of the flyer...



Ralph had tried to take his name off the flyer and put this fellow Larry Underwood on the committee, but Nick wasn't convinced. He'd have to meet Underwood first.



What was holding, so far, was Nick's decision to unilaterally strike Harold Lauder's name from the list of ad hoc committee members.



THERE'S HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE HERE NOW AND THOUSANDS MORE ON THEIR WAY IF BATEMAN'S RIGHT. BUT WHEN RALPH AND I AND MOTHER AND TOM CULLEN AND THE REST OF OUR PARTY GOT HERE, THE ONLY LIVING THINGS IN BOULDER WERE THE CATS AND THE DEER.

Nick finished his journaling for the day with three words:

AUTHORITY.
ORGANIZATION.
POLITICS.

Nick wasn't knocking Lauder out of the picture because he felt Stu Redman and Glen Bateman and their team were trying to hog what was really his football...

(Though hadn't, in a way, he and Tom and Mother and Ralph founded the Boulder Free Zone?)



Alright, it wasn't just that; it was also...

On more than one occasion, Nick wondered if Harold Lauder might not be crazy.

It's that grin, he thought. I don't want to share secrets with anyone who smiles like that and looks like he isn't sleeping well at night.



Nick's body broke out in gooseflesh.

He suddenly felt that he was a part of some bizarre sewing circle of the human race. He and Redman and Bateman and Mother Abigail and Ralph and the others...

And they each had a needle and perhaps they were working together to make a warm blanket to keep off the winter chill...

...or perhaps they had only, after a brief pause, begun to make a large shroud for the human race, beginning at the toes and working their way up...



PEARL AND BROADWAY.

After making love, Stu went to sleep and Frannie sat on their porch, thinking: I'm starting to show. Not a lot yet, but enough, apparently, to warrant conversation.



Earlier, Stu told her about a chat he'd had with Glen, who advanced the idea, cautiously, that the superflu might still be around and that Fran's baby might, possibly, die upon birth.

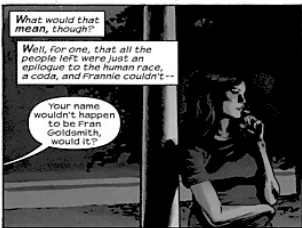
Count on
Glen Bateman
for an Unsettling
Thought or Two.



What would that
mean, though?

Well, for one, that all the
people left were just an
epilogue to the human race,
a coda, and Frannie couldn't--

Your name
wouldn't happen
to be Fran
Goldsmith,
would it?



Holy
God--

Who--?



Larry Underwood,
looking for Harold
Lauder, bearing
gifts.

The best
vintage Bordeaux
in this century, as
my friend Rudy used
to say, God rest
his soul.

Also--



Paydays!
Harold's favorite!
But how did you
know?

That's a
story...



He told her about leaving New York and heading north to Maine with Rita, then...without. He told her about following Harold's signs and a trail of Payday wrappers.

Over the miles, I started to get a sense of Harold.

From the candy wrappers and then the carving on the beam in that barn in Ogunquit--

What carving?



Just his initials. H.L.

Larry explained how his group continued to grow, as they moved across the country, and how he became their de facto leader.

He didn't like the responsibility, he said, and the only way he managed it--whenever he doubted himself--was to ask:

What would Harold do?





Frannie was nearly dumbfounded. She wished she could be there when Larry met Harold; what would his reaction be?



He was in my head, Frannie. And his voice made me think clearly and saved our bacon more than a few times.

And now I'm here and I brought this wine and candy bars.

He'll... he'll be pleased.



You know, I kind of thought he might be your man...

No, he--

No, not Harold.



I should go in now...it's been nice to meet you, Larry.

What is it, Fran? Do I have it wrong about Harold?



No, just...

You make me feel as if I've treated Harold very shabbily and...and...



Can I be blamed for not loving him the way I do Stu?



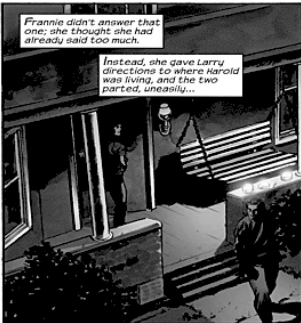
Of course not.

Listen, I'm sorry, I surprised you, I'll go--



He's *changed!* I don't know why or how, and sometimes I think it *might* be for the better, but I don't really know... And sometimes... I'm afraid.

Of Harold?



Frannie didn't answer that one; she thought she had already said too much.

Instead, she gave Larry directions to where Harold was living, and the two parted, *uneasily*...

LATER THAT NIGHT.



In bed next to Stu, thinking about Harold, thinking sleep might not come tonight, Fran sat up--

Something had moved inside her.

Oh, glory...



She would've woken Stu if the baby were his and not Jess's; she *would've* shared the moment with him.

(The next baby, she thought, if there is a next baby....)



Larry Underwood and Harold Lauder were forgotten. One thought crowded all the others from Frannie's mind:

Her baby was alive...

EBEN G. FINE PARK.
HAROLD'S HOUSE.

There were more than a thousand stars above Harold Lauder, but they weren't lovers' stars, they were haters' stars, stars from God's icepick in a sky of black velvet.

Wish-I-may-wish-I-might-have-the-wish-I-wish-tonight:

Drop
dead,
folks...

Looking better than ever (fitter, his skin cleared up), Harold sat with a book in his lap, a tall volume with marbled blue binding and imitation leather covers.

The journal he started to keep after reading Frannie's diary.

He'd already filled the first 60 pages, margin-to-margin, no paragraphs, a solid outpouring of hatred like pus from a skin abscess, begging the question:

**Why did Harold
Lauder hate
so much?**

Interestingly, there was a time, for an hour or a moment, when he contemplated jettisoning the hatred. Considered turning himself into a new Harold Lauder, shaped by the sharp knife of the superflu.

He had sensed, more clearly than any of the others, that people in the Free Zone were not the same as they had been before.

In the end, though, Harold knew that to seize the new opportunity for change would have been tantamount to **murdering** himself... The ghost of every humiliation he had ever suffered cried out **against** that choice....



And meanwhile, there was a dark carnival in the desert; ferris wheels revolving over a black landscape; a sideshow filled with freaks like himself; its discordant music calling to Harold...

In the new Free Zone society he could only be Harold Lauder. Over there, in the west, he could be...a prince.

By starlight, Harold wrote in his journal:

It is said that the two great sins are pride and hate. are they? I think of them as the two greatest virtues. To give away pride and hate is to say you will change for the good of the world. To embrace them is to say that the world must change for the good of you.
I AM ON A GREAT ADVENTURE.

He would be leaving soon. A month or two, then he would head out west and spill his guts about this place. (he was sure to be on the Free Zone Committee, and oh, the secrets he would be privy to...)

He would be welcomed and rewarded by the man in charge there with a... *Hate Cadillac*, and he and Flagg would drive back together and kick this settlement apart like an anvil...

But first, he would settle with Redman, who had lied to him and stolen his woman.

I am on a great adventure...

CONTINUED!

August 10, Stu, Frannie,
Harold, and the rest of their
party arrive in the Boulder
Free Zone.

August 2, Harold
begins his own
journal outside of
Joliet, IL.

start here

June 16, Charles D. Campion's Chevy crashes
into Hapscomb's Texaco station just
north of Arnette, TX.

Journey of
Stu Redman
June 16 - August 10

July 27, Mark Braddock starts exhibiting symptoms of appendicitis in the fairgrounds of Kunkle, OH. He will be dead by the next day, after Stu attempts to surgically remove his appendix. Perion will commit suicide that night.

August 1, Frannie and Stu make love for the first time just outside of Brighton, IN. She confesses to Stu that she is pregnant.

July 12, the group camps near Guilderland, NY, with the new additions of Mark Braddock and Perion McCarthy.

July 4, Stu meets Frannie Goldsmith and Harold Lauder on US 302, who are heading to Stovington. They agree to join together. They return to Woodsville.

June 30, Stu meets Glen Bateman and his dog, Kojak, outside of Woodsville, NH.

July 14, near Batavia, NY, the group decides to start taking Veronal to quiet their disturbing dreams, and to help them sleep.

July 30, the group is ambushed by "the zoo" just west of Columbia, OH; they manage to kill the gunmen and rescue five women: Dana Jurgens, Susan Stern, Patty Kroger, Shirley Hammet, and one unknown woman.

June 27, Stu kills the man known as Elder in self-defense, and escapes from the Stovington facility.

June 22, After the Atlanta labs are contaminated, Stu is moved to a secondary site in Stovington, VT.

June 17, Stu Redman and several infected citizens of Arnette are transported via Army Transport to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, GA.

A SELECTION OF PAGES FROM THIS ISSUE'S SCRIPT BY ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA

PAGE FOURTEEN. PANEL ONE.

A page that sort of echoes the first page of this issue, Mike, but instead of having a narrow panel at the bottom of the page, we have the narrow panel at the top of this page, then almost a splash page taking up the rest of the page. Anyway, in this narrow panel, we see Nick, sitting at a dining room table in the house he shares with Ralph. In a recurring theme, he is writing—making notes—in his notebook, intently, hunched over it, in fact.

FLOATING TEXT: BASELINE DRIVE.

FLOATING TEXT: NICK AND RALPH'S HOUSE.

CAPTION: Nick thought better when he wrote, so he jotted down everything that might be of importance...

PANEL TWO.

Okay, a nice, big, splash-like page, Mike, evoking Nick's thoughts about Boulder. We're looking at a section of the Free Zone, one or two (or more) of the streets. It's night—a blue night—and there are yellow lights in several of the houses, commandeered by survivors. Everyone's settling down for the night, to sleep. (Except for maybe a few night owls, who are strolling along the street or sidewalk...) But it's almost like Grover's Corners (from *Our Town*) or something.

CAPTION: For instance, the fact that Boulder wasn't like other towns. CAPTION: Oh, there were corpses here, and something would have to be done about them, but it wasn't like the other towns that stank of...of charnel houses.

CAPTION: It was as if, somehow, Mother Abigail had led them to the one city in the

United States that was more or less clear of plague victims...

CAPTION: Not that it would matter much if they didn't get the power running by the time the first cold snap arrived.

CAPTION: If they didn't, Nick was afraid that the gathering flock would begin to slip away, and all the meetings, representatives, and ratifications wouldn't stop them.

CAPTION: An unpleasant feeling seemed to be running through the people gathered in Boulder. They were like a bunch of scared kids knocking around in the local haunted house after dark...

CAPTION: Luckily, according to Ralph, there wasn't much wrong at the power plant; possibly, they could have the lights on again by Labor Day...



PAGE FIFTEEN.

PANEL ONE.

Back inside Nick's house, with Nick at the table. We're looking over his shoulder. Nick is still making notes in his notebook, but what we're favoring in this panel, Mike, is the mimeographed flyer Ralph's been crowding about. We can see the flyer's header fairly clearly: **MASS MEETING! REPRESENTATIVE BOARD TO BE NOMINATED AND ELECTED! AD HOC COMMITTEE:** (And then a list of names—and we can see as many or as few of these names as you would like, Mike: Nick Andros, Glen Bateman, Ralph Brentner, Richard Ellis, Fran Goldsmith, Stuart Redman, Susan Stern.) (NOTE: OR, MIKE, IF YOU WANT TO BREAK THIS UP INTO TWO PANELS, WITH NICK WRITING IN HIS JOURNAL, WITH THE FLYER TO THE SIDE IN ONE PANEL, WITH A DETAIL—A CLOSE-UP—OF THE FLYER IN THE SECOND PANEL, THAT'S OKAY, TOO.)

CAPTION: Earlier today, before Ralph went upstairs to sleep, he'd given Nick a copy of the flyer...



PANEL TWO.

Another shot of Nick. Perhaps looking up at him from the point of view of his notebook. So we're looking up at his face as he writes...

CAPTION: Ralph had tried to take his name off the flyer and put this fellow Larry Underwood on the committee, but Nick wasn't convinced. He'd have to meet Underwood first.

PANEL THREE.

One last shot of Nick journaling. Maybe we're above him, looking down on Nick, so we see all his stuff spread out on the table, in front of him. His journal, his pens, various papers, a plate with a half-eaten sandwich on it, maybe a bottle of beer...

CAPTION: What was holding, so far, was Nick's decision to unilaterally strike Harold Lauder's name from the list of ad hoc committee members.

PANEL FOUR.

A close-up on what Nick has written at the bottom of this particular entry. Three words in all caps, underlined and/or circled, for emphasis. That's what it is all about now: **AUTHORITY. ORGANIZATION. POLITICS.**

CAPTION: Nick finished his journaling for the day with three words:

PAGE SIXTEEN.
PANEL ONE.

A beat or two later, and Nick has stood up from the table and is stretching as he walks away from his writing—his day's work—and starts to head to his bedroom, towards the back of the house.

CAPTION: Nick wasn't knocking Lauder out of the picture because he felt Stu Redman and Glen Bateman and their team were trying to *hog* what was really his football...

CAPTION: (Though hadn't, in a way, he and Tom and Mother and Ralph *founded* the Boulder Free Zone?

PANEL TWO.

In Nick's room, and he's getting ready for bed. In this panel, unbuttoning or stripping off his shirt, his mind wandering—to Harold—as he does this...

CAPTION: Alright, it wasn't *just that*; it was also...

CAPTION: On more than one occasion, Nick wondered if Harold Lauder might not be crazy.

CAPTION: *It's that grin*, he thought. *I don't want to share secrets with anyone who smiles like that and looks like he isn't sleeping well at night.*

PANEL THREE.

A shot of Nick from the waist- or chest-up, and he's taking a beat—pausing—since he's been struck with a sudden, not so comforting thought. And Nick's holding up his arm, so he can look at it more closely, and—indeed—goosebumps are running up and down his arm...

CAPTION: Nick's body broke out in gooseflesh.

CAPTION: He suddenly felt that he was a part of some bizarre sewing circle of the human race. He and Redman and Bateman

and Mother Abigail and Ralph and the others...

PANEL FOUR.

Nick sitting down on the edge of his bed—or he's already sat down—and is starting to bend down to untie his shoes. (Or something, Mike, but you get the idea...)

CAPTION: And they each had a needle and perhaps they were working together to make a warm blanket to keep off the winter chill...

PANEL FIVE.

A beat or two later. And Nick is untying one of his shoes. Unlacing it, slowly, in a gesture that somehow echoes the sentiment he's feeling in this panel.

CAPTION: ...or perhaps they had only, after a brief pause, begun to make a large shroud for the human race, beginning at the toes and working their way up...



PAGE SEVENTEEN.

PANEL ONE.

Cut to: The house where Stu, Frannie, and Glen are staying in the Boulder Free Zone. It's nighttime, but the stars and moon are shining, so it's not too dark. Frannie is sitting on the edge of her house's porch, restless, unable to sleep. She is holding her stomach, looking down at it, contemplating it...

FLOATING TEXT: PEARL AND BROADWAY.

CAPTION: After making love, Stu went to sleep and Frannie sat on their porch, thinking: I'm starting to show. *Not a lot yet, but enough, apparently, to warrant conversation.*

PANEL TWO.

A close-up on Frannie's troubled face.

CAPTION: Earlier, Stu told her about a chat he'd had with Glen, who advanced the idea, cautiously, that the superflu might still be around and that her baby might, possibly, die upon birth.

CAPTION: *Count on Glen Bateman for an Unsettling Thought or Two.*

PANEL THREE.



Looking at Frannie from the point of view of someone who is walking up the street—or up the walk—towards Frannie, who is still lost in thought. (NOTE: The balloon in this panel is coming from the off-panel person who is approaching Frannie, addressing her: Larry Underwood.)

CAPTION: What would that mean, though?

CAPTION: Well, for one, that all the people left were just an epilogue to the human race, a coda, and Frannie couldn't—

OP BALLOON: Your name wouldn't happen to be Fran Goldsmith, would it?

PANEL FOUR.

A close-up on Frannie's startled face. She's fairly jumping out of her skin at the sound of Larry's voice. Her head whipping around towards him.

FRANNIE: *Holy God—*

FRANNIE: *Who—?*

PANEL FIVE.

Looking at Larry from Frannie's point-of-view. He is holding both hands out towards her. In one, he holds a fancy bottle of wine. In the other, three or four Payday candy bars.

LARRY: Larry Underwood, looking for Harold Lauder, bearing gifts.

LARRY: The best vintage Bordeaux in this century, as my friend Rudy used to say, God rest his soul.

LARRY: Also—

PANEL SIX.

A panel that includes both of our players, Frannie on the left, Larry on the right. Frannie sitting up and almost clapping, practically. Larry moving towards her, getting ready to sit down with her on the porch...

FRANNIE: Paydays! Harold's favorite! But how did you know?

LARRY: That's a story...

PAGE EIGHTEEN.
PANEL ONE.

Frannie and Larry, sitting on the porch. Larry narrating the events of his life and journeys post-plague. Frannie listening intently, noticeably perking up at the mention of this mysterious carving.

CAPTION: He told her about leaving New York and heading north to Maine with Rita, then...without. He told her about following Harold's signs and a trail of Payday wrappers.

LARRY: Over the miles, I started to get a sense of Harold.

LARRY: From the candy wrappers and then the carving on the beam in that barn in Ogunquit—

FRANNIE: What carving?

PANEL TWO.

A quick close-up on Larry's face. Making a split-second decision.

NO CAPTION OR DIALOGUE.

PANEL THREE.

A flashback panel, flashing back to *Soul Survivors*, Number Two. Page Fourteen, Panel Two. Larry in that barn in Ogunquit, studying the carving Harold made in the beam: HL + FG. (Can't believe we're actually flashing back to this, but there you go...)

LARRY: Good for you, Harold...

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Larry, in the present. A variation on this page's Panel Two. Larry, barely missing a beat as he lies to Frannie to...protect Harold?

LARRY: Just his initials. H.E.L.

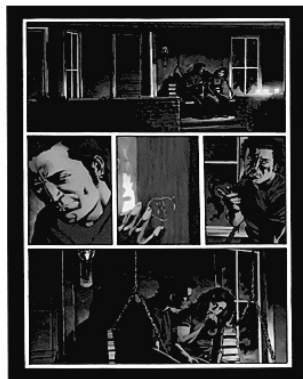
PANEL FIVE.

Pull back for a panel that includes both of our players, sitting on the porch. Larry continuing his story; Frannie, listening.

CAPTION: Larry explained how his group continued to grow, as they moved across the country, and how he became their de facto leader.

CAPTION: He didn't like the responsibility, he said, and the only way he managed it—whenever he doubted himself—was to ask:

LARRY: What would Harold do?



PAGE NINETEEN.

PANEL ONE.

A close-up on Frannie's incredulous face. Is Larry serious?

CAPTION: Frannie was nearly dumbfounded. She wished she could be there when Larry met Harold; what would his reaction be?

PANEL TWO.

Both of our players, but from a different perspective, Mike. We're behind Frannie and Larry, looking at them from the point-of-view of the house. Meaning, Larry's on the left-hand side of the panel and Frannie's on the right. (I know that violates the 180-degree rule, Mike but if you can manage it, it might help shake this talking heads scene up a bit. If not, no worries.) Larry, enthusiastic about Harold, obviously. Frannie, trying to not torpedo Larry's illusions.

LARRY: He was in my head, Frannie. And his voice made me think clearly and saved our bacon more than a few times.

LARRY: And now I'm here and I brought this wine and candy bars.

FRANNIE: He'll...he'll be pleased.

PANEL THREE.

Staying on Larry and Frannie, maybe from the previous panel's point-of-view (so that Larry's on the left and Frannie's on the right), but more of a close-up on them, so that their faces are close to each other's. (Larry's expression reflects the fact that he's picking up on Frannie's weirdness.)

LARRY: You know, I kind of thought he might be your man...

FRANNIE: No, he—

FRANNIE: No, not Harold.

PANEL FOUR.

Now flip the camera around, so that we're in front of the house, and in front of Frannie and Larry, so that Frannie is on the left, Larry is on the right. And Frannie has stood up and is looking down at Larry, who is looking up at Frannie, putting it all out there.

FRANNIE: I should go in now... It's been nice to meet you, Larry.

LARRY: What is it, Fran? Do I have it wrong about Harold?

Focusing on Frannie, looking at her from the off-panel Larry's point-of-view. Clearly, she's conflicted and a bit tormented about her feelings about Harold. Not knowing what she should be feeling/believing.

FRANNIE: No, just..

FRANNIE: You make me feel as if I've treated Harold very shabbily and...and...

PANEL FIVE.

FRANNIE: Can I be blamed for not loving him the way I do, Stu?

PANEL SIX.

A close-up on Larry's face. Regretting crossing this line with Frannie, pulling a Larry and wanting to get out of Dodge ASAP.

LARRY: Of course not.

LARRY: Listen, I'm sorry, I surprised you, I'll go—



PAGE TWENTY.

PANEL ONE.

A panel that shows us both of our players, both of them standing up. Frannie, on the left, in the background, facing us; Larry, on the right, in the foreground, standing with his back towards us, facing Frannie, partly blocking her, maybe. Frannie, nearly spiraling out, fighting that. Larry, brow furrowed, still holding his wine and the Payday candy bars.

FRANNIE: He's changed! I don't know why or how, and sometimes I think it *might* be for the better, but I don't really know...And sometimes...I'm afraid.

LARRY: Of Harold?

PANEL TWO.

A beat or two later. Frannie is turned away from Larry, about to head back into the house. Larry is turned away from Frannie, heading in the opposite direction. There is something tentative about this parting, Mike. Like maybe one (or both?) of our players are looking over their shoulders, back at the other, half-wanting to continue this conversation, but choosing to let it be...

CAPTION: Frannie didn't answer that one; she thought she had already said too much.

CAPTION: Instead, she gave Larry directions to where Harold was living, and the two parted, uneasily...

PANEL THREE.

Cut to: Frannie and Stu's bedroom. Frannie on the left, sitting up in bed, touching her stomach and gasping. Next to her, on the right-hand side of the panel, oblivious, sleeping on his stomach, is Stu.

FLOATING TEXT: LATER THAT NIGHT.

CAPTION: In bed next to Stu, thinking about Harold, thinking sleep might not come tonight, Fran sat up—

FRANNIE: (*whisper*) Oh, glory...

CAPTION: Something had *moved* inside her.

PANEL FOUR.

Swinging the camera around, so that we're looking at Stu, in the panel's foreground, sleeping

soundly, his head turned towards us, the readers. Behind him, looking down at him, wanting to wake him up (but not being able to bring herself to do so), Frannie.

CAPTION: She *would've* woken Stu if the baby were his and not Jess's; she *would've* shared the moment with him.

CAPTION: (*The next baby, she thought, if there is a next baby...*)

PANEL FIVE.

A close-up on Frannie's face. Her eyes closed, but welling with tears. (Of relief? Fear of what might happen when the baby's born? Maybe a bit of both...)

CAPTION: Larry Underwood and Harold Lauder were forgotten. One thought crowded all the others from Frannie's mind:

CAPTION: Her baby was *alive*...



Next: "Harold Lauder, I presume?"



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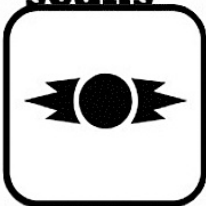
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